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Reviews

A *SPANISH READER*. By JOHN M. PITTARO, Stuyvesant High School, New York City. D. C. Heath & Co. 1919.

The reading lessons are preceded by ten pages of class-room Spanish and followed by two pages of important idioms used in the text. Then we have the inevitable verb-tables, and the book closes with a vocabulary of sixty-six pages.

The list of class-room expressions seems unusually good, but attention may be called to a few of them. "*Colóquense en sus sitios*" is unnecessarily formal for "*Siéntense*" or "*Vayan a sus sitios*." The translation given for "*Guarden Vds. los libros*," would seem to be rather forced. "*Es su turno, señor*," looks like a literal translation from English, for the more idiomatic, "*Le toca a Vd., señor*," or, in question form, "*¿A quién le toca el turno?*" "*¿Tiene alguna falta esa frase?*", seems rather wooden. Why not: "*¿Hay alguna equivocación en esta frase?*" or "*¿Hay algún error en esta oración?*" or even "*¿Está bien esta frase?*" In the case of "*Eso no es respuesta*," it seems to me that "*Eso no es una respuesta*" or "*Eso no es responder*" would be preferable. These few comments are questions rather than criticisms. The matter of classroom Spanish is troublesome to many American teachers and a good little manual on the subject, compiled by an experienced native Spanish teacher, who has not been overlong in this country, is greatly to be desired.

The text is broken up into lessons which for some reason or other are not numbered. Each lesson consists of reading passage, set of questions in Spanish, and various exercises. These last are abundant but happily lack the encyclopedic completeness aimed at in some books.

Of the reading material there is little to be said. The first few are rather difficult—a thing hardly to be avoided. They grow better and more interesting as we get further into the book. Many of them deal with Spain and Spanish America, giving interesting bits of biography and history as well as information about present day affairs and conditions. Many of the selections are from Spanish and Spanish American writers.

The various types of exercises may be indicated by citing those of the first lesson: I. is an exercise in conjugation; II. consists in supplying certain nouns with the appropriate article; III. gives some common phrases to be used in making new sentences; IV. calls for a synonym of *asimismo*; V. asks for the translation

into Spanish of two short sentences. There is no fault to be found with the first four except that the example chosen for Ex. IV. is not a particularly happy one. Some teachers will object to having Ex. V. introduced at so early a stage, and Ex. III. is to be used with caution. In general it is unwise to encourage young pupils to do anything more in their exercises than to repeat exactly what they have already learned. There is the same danger in the early use of such exercises as IV. on page 14, IV. on page 17, IV. on page 24, etc. To allow pupils to do such an exercise as V. on page 27—"Escríbese una composición, de unas cincuenta palabras sobre Nueva York"—at so early a stage of the work, may easily be productive of more harm than good.

The directions for the various exercises are uniformly given in Spanish. The theory is an excellent one, but leads in practice to the use of unusual words which can hardly be of much value. Take as examples "Formúlense preguntas sobre:—." To be absolutely consistent in this matter is hardly worth while.

At the risk of appearing hypercritical or ignorant I venture to question the appropriateness of the direction "*Antepóngase el artículo*" etc., given on page 12. *Anteponer* is not a common word. Is there any objection to "*Escríbese el artículo delante del nombre?*"

On page 13 there is another point that I would like to have settled. Here we have the question *¿Cómo son los corredores?*" Evidently the answer expected is, "*Los corredores son largos y anchos.*" In the same way the answer to "*¿Como son los profesores de Francisco?*" page 19, line 5, would be, "*Los profesores de Francisco son simpáticos.*"

For years I have heard this type of question condemned as an imitation of the German—"Wie ist der Mann?—Der Mann ist dick," and have been assured by Spaniards that it is not good Spanish. Yet it constantly appears in books by men who are either right or should know better. It is recognized that the type "*Como son los corredores*" is legitimate when it calls for such an answer as "*Todo va bien. La disciplina es excelente,*" but not when it is used as in the examples given from Mr. Pittaro's book.

Again, on page 14, we find, "*Escríbanse las frases siguientes en plural.*" Why not *en el plural*? "*Póngase en plural,*" might be explained as a sharp, concise direction, but this can hardly apply to the elaborate direction quoted above. Native Spaniards have told me that the article should be used. What is the answer?

A few other points in the exercises may be noted. "*Este es un mapa,*" page 22, Ex. I., should certainly be, "*Esto es un mapa.*" Is "*salir bien en el examen,*" page 23, the regular expression? Is there any objection to *salir bien del examen*? On page 28, line 1, we read "*En Navidad.*" Is not "*En el día de Navidad*" or "*Por*

las Navidades" more usual? "*¿Con quiénes?*" in question 1, page 28, seems ultra formal. There could be no objection to "*¿Con quien?*"

On page 83 in §1 of "El Viaje," we read "En las vacaciones." Would not *durante* or *por* be better, according to the sense intended?

Throughout the book, Mr. Pittaro's notes deserve special commendation. Especially valuable is the frequent repetition of important matters. Many of the points explained in the notes are again given in the vocabulary. Such a procedure—while out of place in a more advanced book—is absolutely sound in a book for beginners. The notes are wisely placed at the foot of the page, where the pupil may consult them with the least possible expenditure of time and effort.

The vocabulary, always the hardest part of a school book to prepare, is well planned and in general well executed. Mr. Pittaro has given the minimum of grammatical terminology: he has listed the forms of irregular verbs; he has indicated the peculiarities of irregular and radical-changing verbs; he has explained the idioms and other difficult expressions met with in the text, and he has inserted, in alphabetical order, all the proper names needing explanation, instead of crowding them into the notes. All this goes to make up a good vocabulary and it is an ungrateful task to call attention to the following points:

If the change of the stem vowel is to be indicated for radical-changing verbs, why not do so in the case of *acordarse*, *acertar*, *almorzar*, *quebrar* and *tropezar*? If we have (ue) under *poder*, why not (ie) under *querer*, even if it be omitted under *tener*. Is it sufficient to give only (ie) under *convertir* and *consentir*? If *deduzco* is given under *deducir*, why not *conozco* under *conocer*, and follow the same practice with regard to *ofrecer*, *proteger* and *instruir*? Is it fair to say that *reponer* means *to reply*, without stating the limitations? Why not list e.g., *loqué* under *tocar* and *pagué* under *pagar*? Finally why dismiss *vamos* with the statement that it is a present indicative, when it is often something else?

The physical makeup of the book is excellent. Paper, print, binding are all good. The pictures are numerous, well chosen and surprisingly clear. The book is a good one and will have many friends. It deserves wide use.

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